

## **DESIGN REVIEW BOARD**

### **Fiscal Year 2011**

Created by Town Meeting in 1983, the Design Review Board provides advisory review of the exterior design of private projects in downtown Amherst and public projects anywhere in Amherst.

The Design Review Board held 13 meetings during FY 11, including a Joint Meeting with the Historical Commission to discuss conceptual designs, submitted by members of the public, for a new town flag. The number of meetings amounted to a slightly higher number than in FY 10 and a higher number than in each of the three years prior to FY 10.

#### Public Projects Reviewed

*Head Start Programs* – The Design Review Board reviewed a plan for a new shed to hold toys for the Head Start program, currently housed in the North Amherst School Building, as well as a plan to replace the fence at the Amherst Community Child Care Center on Strong Street, where a second Head Start program is housed.

*Community Field Comfort Station* – The Board reviewed plans for the expansion and renovation of the Community Field Comfort Station on Triangle Street, along with site improvements, including handicapped access.

*South Amherst School* – The Board reviewed plans for a new front door and an expanded parking lot at the South Amherst School on South East Street, where an alternative education program has been held for the past several years.

*Bangs Center* – The Board reviewed plans, prepared by the Department of Public Works, for a new entry plaza at the Bangs Center. The purpose of the plans was to renovate the entry plaza, to resolve pavement heaving and provide a beautiful, safe, handicapped-accessible entrance to this popular downtown destination.

#### Private Projects (Downtown) Reviewed

The redevelopment and improvement of downtown buildings and sites continued. The following projects and signs were reviewed in FY 11:

*Boltwood Place* – The Board continued to work with designers and developers of Boltwood Place, a new mixed-use, LEED-certified building in downtown Amherst, located on a lot behind Judie's Restaurant, with the ground floor to be retail/commercial and the units above to be residential. The Board reviewed proposed façade treatments and site improvements and advised the applicant and the Planning Board on ways to help this contemporary-style building fit in and be compatible with the existing surroundings, including 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century downtown buildings. The applicant met with and received recommendations from the DRB during FY 11, following up on previous meetings during FY 10.

*Olympia Oaks* – The Board offered advice to the Zoning Board of Appeals during the Comprehensive Permit review process for this multi-unit affordable residential development being built on East Pleasant Street in North Amherst.

*79 Taylor Street* – At the request of the Planning Board, the Design Review Board reviewed site plans and architectural designs for a large addition to an existing single-family house, at the corner of High Street and Taylor Street, to create a proposed two-family house in a historic neighborhood near downtown Amherst. Over the course of three meetings, the Board counseled the owner on the development of an improved architectural design and site plan for this large new structure, more compatible with its surroundings than the original design. The Board advised the Planning Board on design issues and the result is a building that is more compatible with its surroundings than the original design for this prominent corner property near downtown Amherst.

*Youth Action Coalition Mural* – The Board reviewed designs for a mural and accompanying plaque proposed by the Youth Action Coalition for the west wall of the Amherst Cinema Building in downtown Amherst. According to its website, the Coalition “promotes youth empowerment through creative expression and social action projects.” The resulting mural depicts positive aspects of Amherst’s and the country’s society and culture that are to be celebrated as well as negative aspects that need to be improved upon.

*Signs, Awnings and Lights* – Restaurants including Miss Saigon, Lit, That’s a Wrap, Lime Red Teahouse, Mango, Mango, Old Towne Tavern (formerly Charlie’s), GoBerry, Johnny’s Tavern, White Hut, Chez Albert; Professional Offices, Banks and Businesses including Bulkley, Richardson & Gelinas Law Offices, Dr. Aaron DiMaio Orthodontist and People’s United Bank, Margurite Miller (Psychic) and Custom Made Signs; Hair Salons including Chopping Block and Studio E; and Religious Institutions including Knights of Columbus and Vita Nova.

*Town Flag* – In June 2010, the DRB had received an inquiry from a member of the Select Board regarding the design of a proposed town flag. The DRB agreed to work with the Select Board on this important project in the upcoming fiscal year. During FY 11, the DRB reviewed several flag designs that had been submitted by members of the public. After careful consideration, the DRB and the Historical Commission advised the Select Board that working with a professional designer/artist would be a more productive method of developing a design. At the request of a member of the Select Board, local artist, Barry Moser, agreed to work with the Design Review Board and the Historical Commission to develop a design for Amherst’s new town flag. The Select Board will make the final decision on the selection of a design, with advice from the Design Review Board and the Historical Commission.

Respectfully submitted,

Janet Winston, Chair  
Design Review Board